

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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3.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRESS SEES LITTLE GOOD IN CURRENT SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: THE SYRIAN PRESS HAS BEEN EXAMINING THE FALLOUT FROM BEGIN'S WASHINGTON TRIP AND ISRAEL'S INVASION OF LEBANON, AND FINDS LITTLE TO RECOMMEND THE SITUATION. IT ADMITS THE US DOES HAVE DIFFERENCES WITH ISRAEL BUT SEES NO POSITIVE CHANGE IN US POLICY RESULTING. THE US WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR ISRAEL-EGYPT NEGOTIATIONS AND TO EXPAND THEM TO INCLUDE JORDAN. IT WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO TRY TO GET AROUND THE PROBLEM OF THE PLO AND FOR THIS REASON SYRIA REJECTS THE US ASWAN FORMULA. THE PRESS IS CANDID IN OUT-LINING SYRIA'S PREDICAMENT IN LEBANON PORTRAYING THE CHOICE
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AS BEING BETWEEN WAR WITH ISRAEL AND EMBARRASSMENT BEFORE THE PALESTINIANS AND THE ARAB WORLD. THE PRESS COMES UP WITH NO SOLUTIONS FOR THE FRUSTRATIONS SYRIA FACES EXCEPT TO REVERT TO TIRED CALLS FOR STEADFASTNESS.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE SYRIAN PRESS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS HAS BEEN TRYING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

ARGUMENT WITH ISRAEL AND ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON SOUTH LEBANON. THE PRESS HAS CONCLUDED FINALLY THAT THERE REALLY IS A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES. GONE ARE THE CLAIMS THAT THE US-ISRAELI DISPUTE IS A CHARADE DESIGNED TO SECURE MORE ARAB CONCESSIONS. NOW, ACCORDING TO TISHRIIN, "THE US AND ISRAEL ARE IN AGREEMENT OVER THE ANNEXATION OF OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES TO ISRAEL, BUT THE DISAGREEMENT IS OVER THE AREA OF THESE TERRITORIES. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE USA SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLE OF TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL THE ARAB TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967,..FURTHERMORE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE DIFFERENCE OF 'INTERPRETATION' HAS NOT LED AND WILL NOT LEAD TO ANY EFFECT ON THE NATURE OF THE VERY SPECIAL RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN THE USA AND ISRAEL."

3. HAVING ADMITTED US-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION OF RESOLUTION 242, THE PRESS ASSUMES THAT US INITIATIVES WILL NOW BE MADE TO SAVE SADAT. THESE US INITIATIVES WILL TAKE THREE DIRECTIONS: A) "TO ENCOURAGE THE SADAT REGIME TO GO AHEAD AND NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY WITH ISRAEL, OR THROUGH THE US, BY PROMISING TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT TO BACK DOWN FROM THE NEW EXTREMIST STAND IT HAS RECENTLY TAKEN. THIS WOULD BE RECIPROCATED BY NEW CONCESSIONS BY THE SADAT REGIME ON A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, THE PALESTINIAN FUTURE, AND DETAILS REGARDING HOW LONG ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WOULD REMAIN IN THE SINAI AND ISRAELI AIRFIELDS AS WELL AS IN DEMILITARIZED ZONES AND EARLY WARNING STATIONS, AND THE RIGHT TO RECIPROCAL INSPECTION;" B) "TO STRIVE TO PERSUADE ARAB PARTIES TO JOIN SADAT IN HIS 'PEACE' PROCESS. THOUGHTS IN THIS DIRECTION TURN TOWARDS JORDAN;" AND C) "TO CONVINCE THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO MAKE 'CONCESSIONS' THAT WOULD HELP PUSH THE PROCESS OF AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT FORWARD. THE CONCESSION THE US WILL WORK FOR IS TO RETURN THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT TO THE PAST POSITIONS OF ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS, ESPECIALLY TO AGREE TO DISCUSS WITHDRAWAL FROM SOME WEST BANK TERRITORIES. THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WOULD BE 'RESOLVED' THROUGH AN ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL, JORDAN, AND PALESTINIANS FROM OUTSIDE THE PLO."

4. THE MEDIA EXPECTS WASHINGTON TO PRESS ITS NEW INITIATIVES THROUGH MESSAGES TO SOME RULERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THROUGH ENVOYS VISITING THE AREA. SYRIA, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, REJECTS WASHINGTON'S FRAMEWORK SINCE IT DOES NOT OFFER AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT FOR THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND BECAUSE IT RULES OUT ANY ROLE FOR THE UN AND THE SOVIET UNION. THE PRESS RECALLS THAT "SYRIA REFUSED TO RECEIVE THE AMERICAN ROVING AMBASSADOR, ATHERTON, BECAUSE HIS WHOLE VISIT WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING A COVER FOR SADAT'S CAPITULATIONIST

MOVES INSTEAD OF BEING A VISIT CONNECTED WITH PREPARATION FOR THE CONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. SYRIA HAS DECLARED ITS REJECTION OF THE AMERICAN FORMULA PUT FORWARD TO MAKE THE PALESTINIANS TAKE PART IN THE DETERMINATION OF THEIR FUTURE, A FORMULA WHICH PRESUMES A CATEGORICAL DENIAL OF THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN ARAB PEOPLE TO THE DETERMINATION OF ITS FUTURE. THAT AMERICAN FORMULA ALSO CREATES A PRECEDENT HITHERTO UNIMAGINABLE IN THE ANNALS OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY, WHICH IS THAT THE HANGMAN SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE DETERMINATION OF ITS VICTIM'S FUTURE." AL-BAATH CONCLUDES: "WE MUST BECOME PERFECTLY AWARE THAT AMERICA CANNOT BRING US THE JUST PEACE WE CHERISH."

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5. SYRIAN PRESS ALSO EVALUATES THE OBJECTIVES OF ISRAEL'S MARCH INTO SOUTH LEBANON. THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE, ACCORDING TO TISHRIIN IS "TO EMBARRASS SYRIA BY DRIVING HER TO TAKE ONE OF TWO OPTIONS: EITHER TO STRATEGICALLY FACE UP TO THE CAREFULLY PREPARED ZIONIST INVASION IN A BATTLE WHOSE TIME AND PLACE WOULD HAVE BEEN CHOSEN BY ISRAEL OR TO FEEL COMPELLED TO TAKE A NEUTRAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGGRESSION, AND FACE EMBARRASSMENT VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS AND THE

LEBANESE. CLEARLY, BOTH OPTIONS ARE DIFFICULT. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT THE ATTEMPT TO EMBARRASS SYRIA WAS NOT ONLY AN ISRAELI-AMERICAN WISH, BUT WAS, REGRETFULLY, THE WISH OF WELL-KNOWN 'ARAB' SIDES AS WELL." HAVING OUTLINED SYRIA'S DILEMMA THE PRESS REACTS STRONGLY TO CRITICISM EMANATING FROM IRAQ AND "OTHERS" FOR THE SUPPOSED DECISION BY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SYRIA TO MOVE ITS FORCES TO THE LITANI RIVER TO PREVENT THE PALESTINIANS FROM ATTACKING THE "ZIONIST ENEMY". THE PRESS CLARIFIES SYRIA'S POSITION: "FIRST, THE SYRIAN FORCES ARE STILL AT THEIR POSITIONS. SECOND: SYRIA HAS NOT AND WILL NOT BLOCK THE ARRIVAL OF ANY ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE. THIRD: SYRIA WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT CHARGE ITS FORCES TO PROTECT THE ENEMY WHO OCCUPIED ITS LAND; AND IT WILL NOT CONTRIBUTE TO ANY ACTION THAT PREVENTS PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE FROM EXERCISING ITS NATIONAL DUTY AND ITS RIGHT TO FIGHT AGAINST THE ISRAELI OCCUPIER WHO USURPS THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN ARAB PEOPLE."

6. THE PRESS RESERVED SPECIAL MENTION FOR CAPTAIN SAID HADDAD'S PLANS FOR SOUTH LEBANON DISMISSING HIM AS AN ISRAELI TOOL AND PROMISING TO COUNTER HADDAD'S PRONOUNCEMENTS AND PROGRAMS.

7. FINALLY, THE PRESS TALKS ABOUT THE FIFTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR. GIVEN ISRAEL'S INTRANSIGENCE ON OCCUPATION AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, THAWRA CLAIMS "THE OUTBREAK OF A FIFTH WAR IS SOMETHING TO BE EXPECTED, ISRAEL IS ACTIVELY PREPARING ITSELF TO DESTROY THE ARAB FORCE, PARTICULARLY THE SYRIAN FORCE. THE LEADERS OF THE ZIONIST ENEMY HAVE APPARENTLY ACTED IN THIS MANNER ON THE BASIS OF THEIR FALSE BELIEF, THAT THE NEW ROUND OF THE FIGHTING WILL REALIZE FOR THEM THE 'VICTORIES' THEY WERE UNABLE TO REALIZE DURING THE OCTOBER WAR OF LIBERATION." "ISRAEL OCCUPIED SOUTHERN LEBANON IN ORDER TO COME CLOSER TO THE PLACES WHERE THE ADF ARE POSITIONED, AND THEREBY TO SEEK TO CAUSE DIRECT FRICTION WITH THEM." THAWRA WARNS THAT EGYPT WILL BE SUCKED IN TO ANY NEW WAR AND THAT OTHER ARAB STATES WILL JOIN. THAWRA CONCLUDES WITH A QUESTION: "WHO WILL START THE FIFTH WAR? VISIBLE, ACTUAL FACTS INDICATE CLEARLY THAT IT IS ISRAEL WHO IS TRYING HARD TO ATTACK SYRIA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND ITS LAND AND FORCES."

8. COMMENT: WE ARE STRUCK BY THE CANDOR OF SYRIA'S PRESS IN

DESCRIBING ITS PREDICAMENT IN LEBANON. THE STATEMENT REJECTING A SYRIAN ROLE IN MOVING TO THE LITANI IS AN OUTGROWTH OF THIS PREDICAMENT. AS LONG AS THE PALESTINIAN ARE EYBALL-TO-EYEBALL WITH THE ISRAELIS, SYRIA'S DILEMMA WILL CONTINUE TO HAMPER ANY EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE PLO. ONCE THE ISRAELIS WITHDRAW, THE PLO CAN BE PORTRAYED AS OPPOSING LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY-- THEN SYRIA CAN ACT WITH RELATIVE (BUT PREFERABLY QUIET) IMPUNITY. AS FOR THE PRESS ANALYSIS OF THE US, SOME BUT NOT ALL OF THE VIEWS EXPRESSED SEEM TO US DELIBERATE EXAGGERATIONS FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION. SYRIA CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THE US HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN FINDING PEACE, BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE ONLY ROLE. THE SYRIANS WILL PROBABLY STAND BY THE THESIS THAT THE SOVIETS MUST BE INVOLVED. TO OUR RECOLLECTION THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE SEEN A RELATIVELY CLEAR REJECTION OF THE ASWAN FORMULA. THIS MAY STEM FROM THE SYRIAN CONVICTION THAT THE US STILL THINKS IT CAN FIND A WAY AROUND THE PROBLEM OF THE DIASPORA PALESTINIANS AND MORE SPECIFICALLY AROUND THE PLO. THE PRESS, ACCURATELY WE BELIEVE, REFLECTS SYRIAN CONCERN THAT SYRIA SOMEHOW IS BEING SET UP BY THE US, ISRAEL, AND SYRIA'S ARAB BROTHERS TO BE THE FALL GUY IN LEBANON AND IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. IT FURTHER REFLECTS SYRIAN FRUSTRATION OVER ITS INABILITY TO DO MUCH TO COUNTER THIS TREND EXCEPT TO FALL BACK ON TIRED NODS TO "STEADFASTNESS" AND LOOK TO THE SOVIET UNION. MURPHY

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